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ABSTRACT

Problems faced by Koreans in the United States are identified and analyzed in this paper, and some pragmatic remedies are offered. First, the acculturation process is slow--the mean of the Koreans' sojourn in the United States is only 6.5 years, whereas complete acculturation takes several generations. Second, although most Korean emigres learned some English before leaving Korea, it is inadequate for everyday survival needs. Third, 36 percent of Korean immigrants had attained college degrees or other higher education degrees before coming here, but professional accreditations are often invalidated in the United States, and the language deficiency and lack of up-to-date technical skills often result in downward occupational mobility. Fourth, Korean values of patriarchy, perpetuation of family honor, and filial piety conflict with American values, and a generation gap develops. Fifth, parents want children to maintain the Korean language, but the children see no use for it in their everyday lives outside the home; scheduling and transportation problems interfere with attendance of Korean language schools. Finally, although bilingual education for Korean heritage maintenance might be seen as moderately successful, its value as a mainstreaming tool is less certain. (CMG)

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Introduction:

The mass immigration of Koreans to the United States since 1970 has made the Koreans the fourth largest Asian Minorities in America. (Census of Population, U.S. Summary, 1980, and California Summary, 1980). This is significant in terms of "visibilities of minorities." During this rapid growth of post Korean war immigration, the problems of assimilation of Koreans in America has been widely discussed among the social scientists and the educationists (H. C. Kim et al, 1974). However, very little in-depth analysis of the causes of problems and viable alternative remedies have been contemplated among scholars and bilingual educators.

The main purpose of this paper is then (1) to identify explicitly and analyze the major causes of problems and difficulties faced by Koreans in America; (2) to compare and contrast similarities and differences, if any, of those problems between Korean Americans and other Asian minorities in the United States, and (3) to propose some viable and pragmatic alternatives and/or remedies. For these purposes, the concepts of "life chances" and "life styles" (W. M. Hurh, 1974) are inherently referred to in a multi and cross cultural inter-ethnic contexts.

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Problem 1 - The Slow Acculturation Process ("Adhesive Adaption")

The majority of the Korean immigrants still hold very strong attachment to their native culture. W. M. Hurh and Kim in their Final Report to the National Institute of Mental Health in 1980 revealed that the mean of the Korean's sojourn in the U.S. is 6.5 years and that it takes several generations for a complete acculturation for most minority groups. They called this slow acculturation process "Adhesive Adaption". This phenomenon is further explicated along with the fact that Korean immigrants (1) are often ashamed of being Korean nationals; (2) are deficient in oral English; (3) are unable to read American newspapers and magazines; (4) are reluctant to Anglicize their first names and (5) confine themselves to Korean churches for "marginal existential status" rather than attending American churches (W. M. Hurh and K. C. Kim, 1980).

These ethnocentric confinements and the slow acculturation process may be remedied by the Korean immigrants themselves through (1) a serious reevaluation of the purposes and objectives as to what had brought them to America (the underlining motives), be they political, economic or educational; (2) renewing their awareness that America is a multi-ethnic society and that Koreans compose part of it within an interethnic structure, be it called a "Minority", "Weak race" or "non-standard"; (3) enlightening themselves with the fact that other Asian immigrants in America such as Chinese and Japanese have taken almost three generations building their ethnic foundation despite numerous political harassment and the socio-economic discriminations under the racially derogatory labeling "yellow race", "Chinks" or "Japs"; (4) raising their self-esteem by modeling after the achievements and the prominence made by other Asian immigrants in the political arena, economic enterprises and cultural

contributions in this country. There are abundant examples to support this:

Asians in the senate/congress/government, successful businessmen and industrialists, athletes, private schools for their native language and the cultural festivities such as the Chinese New Year and the Korean parade, the latter which has improved enormously "the Korean visibility" in America ever since it began in 1960.

Problem 2 - The Language Deficiency in English (The Language Shock)

Although the majority of the Korean emigres received some form of English language instruction prior to their arrival in the United States, the deficiency in spoken English is still serious. This is largely due to the fact that they were taught by the grammar and textbook method of instruction, which lacks awfully in everyday conversation for survival needs and coping skills (banking, obtaining a driver's license, first aid/medical help, etc.).

For the remedying of this problem it is advisable that the prospective immigrants receive some private instruction in English with emphasis on the vocabularies and terms for survival needs and for the coping skills as soon as they have made the decision for immigration. In the event that this is not done prior to their arrival in the U.S., the newly arrived immigrants should

find ways to acquire oral proficiency in English by attending ESL classes and/or by receiving private tutoring initially, after which more advanced and written proficiency can be attained centering around the occupational and professional terminologies one would be dealing with. The Japanese have successfully implemented this approach through an intensive training for the students and businessmen with workbooks and cassettes. The Korean communities in the U.S. should initiate this sort of training along with various activities welcoming the newcomers.

Another major reason that leads to the low oral proficiency is due to the fact that the Korean immigrants segregate themselves from the English-speaking people largely because of the insecurity in English proficiency. This sort of self-exile attitude is not only observed among the immigrants but also observed frequently among the students and scholars attending American colleges and universities. The language deficiency cannot be removed by withdrawing oneself from the target language. Practice English which is the currency of social exchange is best acquired by immersion.

It is an axiom that the less one practices speaking English, the less one becomes proficient in the command of the English language. This is not only true with English language but equally true with the Korean language although it is their native tongue. One should realize that the problem of language acquisition, whether it is native or second, plays an important function affecting the "life chances" and "life styles", which Maslow called "Hierarchical needs of human beings", be it a Korean or an American (A. Maslow 1943).

Problem 3 - Declining Occupational Ladder (A Downward Syndrome):

According to 1978 statistics of the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare, 36% of the Korean immigrants have attained their college degrees or higher prior to their arrival in the U.S. This places them as the highest educated among other Asian Americans (U.S. Dept. of HEW, 1978). Despite the high level of education, occupational skills and the professional training they attained in their native country, the former professional accreditation is often invalidated in America. It was also revealed in a Los Angeles Survey that the greatest decline was observed among the high ranking officials, the highly trained professionals and the Korean women (E.Y. Yu, 1978). This downward syndrome in occupational mobility is mainly due to the language deficiency as discussed in the foregoing. This deficiency presents^{an} even more serious dilemma for the professionals when the state examination is required

for a license, i.e., Medical Board, Bar Association, Teaching credentials, State Personnel Board, Pharmacists and Nurses. Furthermore, when Korean applicants encounter an interview situation for a prospective job, they literally "freeze up".

Another reason for the downward trend in the occupational market stems from the lack of up-to-date technical skills in the chosen field. Although the Korean professionals may possess fairly sophisticated theoretical knowledge, they are often deficient in the application of the theory into technical know-how. This is understandable considering the inadequate laboratory facilities, equipment and on-the-job training even though considerable improvement has been made over the years.

The remedies for the prevention of downward occupational mobility among the Korean immigrants should now be examined: They should (1) receive intensive training in spoken English prior to their departure as suggested earlier; (2) enroll in vocational school (i.e., Electronic or Real Estate) or in preparatory courses such as GMAT, LSAT, etc.; (3) socialize with a person or with a professional group in the chosen field, and (4) retrain oneself by taking courses in the professional schools in the community colleges or in the higher educational institutions.

In this way a former math teacher need not look into opening a small grocery store, nor a pharmacist contemplate opening a liquor store, thus maintaining the same occupational/professional status quo, if not upward occupational mobility.

When comparing the occupational mobility of the Asian immigrants in the U.S., Filipinos have the least difficulty in upgrading their occupational mobility and enjoy the highest proportion of the professional jobs in the U.S. (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1979). This may be due to the fact that English is used widely as a medium in the Philippines.

Problem 4 - The Splitting of Family Relationship (Breakdown of "Roots")

The Korean adults immigrated into America bringing with them an orderly Confucian patriarchy. That is, father is the center of household with strong hierarchy in family constellation; perpetuation of family honor (the "roots"), and filial piety are ^{of} utmost concern to every member in the family. The parents insist on practicing the same as far as they can extend. While the virtue of these ethics are profound to some, they are quite polar to the egalitarian concept of America about sex-roles, nuclear family, individual-centered and pragmatic way of life. The splitting phenomenon takes place more seriously when the children embrace "American anarchist cult of youth" and exclude the Korean counterpart at the same time. Consequently, the children begin to question the traditional orientation and become confused and ambivalent. Further, the children challenge the authority of parents (more so against father's than mother's). This is especially true in an immigrant family in which the father is undergoing a very difficult time in America where the children imply or express their father's lack of decent occupation/profession and the less income thereof; their confinement to the Korean community for socialization and business needs (shopping, banking, insurance, etc.). The longer the family has resided in the U.S., the greater the value conflict and the communication gap between the parents and children. Not only do the children decry the inability of their parents in the English language, but also become even more resistant to converse with them in Korean (J.H. Park & E.C. Kim, 1980). Arising from the different set of value judgments and the pro-social behavior, it is not unusual to see the Korean children ponder their identity (Who Am I?) because neither the parents nor the school has attempted to explain intelligently to the children about the ethnic identity and its implications, which they do not become acutely aware of by themselves until they reach the college years. The intimate family relationship which they cherish^{ed} and enjoyed in their home country turns into an isolation under "Generation gap" or "Culture gap".

Another source of conflict stems from the cognitive dissonance of the adult's mentality about sex roles- the "Gender gap", and American androgyny. For instance, the father or the males are not supposed to help with dishes or minute household chores; girls are to engage in the traditional feminine profession such as teaching, nursing, home economics and never to enter the male oriented occupation such as driving a bus, telephone installer, or construction assistant.

Immigrants who have brought the elderly parents experience another kind of conflict; the respect children used to pay in their home country gradually diminish^{es} and becomes non-existent; no attention is given to the socialization and recreation of their elders which they enjoyed with their relatives and friends in the homeland; often confined to do babysitting of their ill-mannered grandchildren; all of which results in the reminiscence of their good old times in their native homeland.

Another major family breakdown is caused by the American pattern of dating behavior and courtship which most Korean parents disapprove of and which creates the lessening of parental authority. The problem of family roles and conflicts among the Korean immigrants in America which have been discussed in the foregoing were surveyed widely and reported in the Joong Ahng Daily News of Los Angeles in 1979.

The cures for the splitting family relationship among the Korean immigrants are by no means easy to find; however, the following are suggested alternatives:

- (1) While it is virtuous to hold the traditional values, one must realize that human behavior is heavily influenced by the cultural environment, new or old, in which the thought pattern and the behavior change (after all, Confucius was not born in America).

- (2) Korean parents must realize that their authority will not and can not be maintained merely by enforcing their rules dogmatically. The concerns and rules must be communicated to their children with care and respect; concerns, agreements and rules must accompany consent of the family members, and the parents demonstrate their authority by carrying out these agreements.
- (3) The question of ethnic identity must be answered in a self-fulfilling bi-cultural/bi-national context. That is to say, "I am a Korean, but at the same time I am an American. I am enriched by having two cultures which some people don't have. I will make the best of the two; I shall be proud of and cherish them".
- (4) When it becomes evident that the conflict becomes serious between the elderly parents and the minors, it is advisable that the elderly parents live separately and should not conceive of it as a family degradation or family destruction. This is not only a unique phenomenon among the immigrant's family, but it is increasing among other Asian minorities as well. It must be remembered that the intimacy and the family ties can be still strongly adhered to although they live under separate roofs. What is most important is the way they interact and that the Confucius ethic of "All family under one roof", so to speak, is not pragmatic in modern days.
- (5) Of all the changes of human behavior in the universe, perhaps the most drastic change has been the human sexual behavior, of which Korean parents do not want to speak openly. Parents must be cognizant of the values of sex education, either privately or in the school through which the children can be educated to form wholesome and constructive attitudes toward dating, marriage, and child rearing.

An old ethic, "Boys and girls of age 7 should not be together" is truly out of place in contemporary society. It is very important to emphasize that while there is freedom, there is responsibility; and if the individual is accountable for one's responsibility/consequences, one is free to choose. After all, parents do not live with the children forever, nor can they be responsible for their conduct permanently.

Problem 5 - The Korean Language Maintenance (Ineffective Pedagogy)

After having spent a couple of years in the United States, many Korean parents feel that they have lost their second generation even more so, because the youngsters no longer want to speak their mother tongue with the family members nor wish to retain it. Parents advocate that Korean must be spoken, as it is their mother tongue; it comes to be a diplomatic tool to be able to converse with relatives and friends in Korean, and it also becomes utilitarian when visiting or undertaking some business in Korea in the future. Children, however, categorically deny all the maintenance theories by claiming that the Korean language becomes absolutely useless in socializing with their peers and in the pursual of the subject-matter in the school.

The Korean language maintenance effort has been operative in most of the major cities in the U.S. mostly in the form of a private school supported by the Korean community organizations or by the Korean churches. Some have had good success; some have phased out. The chief difficulties stemmed from:

- (1) Korean language is taught on either Saturdays or Sundays,
- (2) Parent's inconvenience of transporting children to the language school,
- (3) High teacher turnover due to either little^{or} no monetary compensation for their services,

(4) High degree of boredom for the learners largely due to the book oriented recitation method and,

(5) Inappropriate selection of teaching materials.

The difficulties identified in the foregoing may be alleviated by:

(1) Holding the language school every other week or during their recess time (Christmas, Easter, Summer vacation, etc.),

(2) Televised instruction is certainly a possibility,

(3) The parents who strongly uphold the "every weekend" can certainly teach them on their own with or without cassette tapes. In this way, the children do not see going to the language school every weekend as a trauma,

(4) Parents agree upon some kind of car pool arrangement,

(5) Teachers should be monetarily compensated no matter how little the amount may be (except the university students who are enrolled in some kind of Asian-American project or intern program for credits),

(6) Teachers should receive some kind of in-service training by bilingual teacher trainers exposing them to the general linguistic background and the innovative methods of teaching the Korean language (the Korean consulates should provide the maximum assistance for this),

(7) Teachers should make wise selection of the teaching materials from those published by the Korean bilingual professionals in the United States (Korean American Bilingual Association, Korean Bilingual Materials published by Los Angeles and San Francisco Unified School Districts, etc.) rather than blindly adopting the materials written by the Korean Ministry of Education.

It must be pointed out that the acquisition of language, be it native or second, will not be attained by school instruction alone; it must be closely

followed up and reinforced by home instructions. The classical example of this has been seen in the Chinese and Japanese families in the U.S.

- (6) Some reward or tokenism should be considered for the children's cooperation to learn the Korean language and their accomplishment. No one can deny the extrinsic motivational value of behavior modifications, which is widely acclaimed in American education. The same should apply to teaching the Korean language.

- (9) Audio-visual materials and the media kits which contain survival needs and coping skills should be utilized extensively.

It is to be noted here that the effort by the Korean Ministry of Education which sponsored the Summer Education Workshop for the Korean American children overseas, with room and board paid for the past several years, has certainly contributed enormously to the maintenance of the Korean language and their native heritage as well.

Problem 6 - Bilingual and Cross Culture Education (Unilateral Heritage Theory)

Numerous researchers have indicated pedagogical advantages and the positive effects of bilingual education (K. Gezi et al, 1979), whereas some have expressed the contrary. While the specific findings of the positive effects of bilingual education for the Korean children are scanty, nevertheless, the major cities in the U.S. having fairly good sized Korean populations have established Korean bilingual classes through the Bilingual Ed. Act, Title VII, Elementary and Secondary Ed. Act of 1968. Curriculum consists mainly of Korean history, literature, and language, the primary goal of which is to sustain the Korean cultural heritage.

A question arises as to whether or not and to what extent bilingual education for the Korean children has served as the vehicle for the maintenance of Korean cultural heritage and also as a positive change for "mainstreaming" in

American society. The paucity of the published documents related to this query does not reflect scholarly depth; however, the following can be conjectured:

- (1) The heritage maintenance effort has been moderately successful when considering the overall cognitive awareness (at least children keep hearing about it) and the long term transfer value of their heritage (children begin to see all the "culture stuff" they heard before especially when visiting their homeland).

The "mainstreaming" with proficiency in English as a second language (ESL) however, has not been visible, because the students do not perceive nor are taught how the Korean culture with ESL as a conveyor could be instrumental in the actualization of "mainstreaming" in a dominant culture. Moreover, children are not cognizant of the possible effect of their cultural heritage toward the political and socio-economic uplift in their future. After all, "mainstreaming" is not actualized in the classroom made up of all Koreans. To further promote the "mainstreaming" ideology it is postulated that the Korean bilingual program in a cross-cultural context should be provided not only for children alone but also for adults and for other children who have Korean peers in the neighborhood or in school. After all, what is cross-cultural" when it is done only for one cultural group?

Korean churches should also seriously contemplate conducting their services and activities bilingually, so that the family does not have to be concerned with the choice of churches, namely, Korean church for adults and American church for the children.

Cross-cultural programs dealing with other ethnic minorities can be taught as a separate subject, Ethnic Studies-Filipino Americans, e.g. or as an integrated subject in the social studies. Curriculum specialists should be able to

plan the scope, sequence and the articulation with cooperation from the social scientists, especially that of ethnic scholars and the various practitioners (not just the teachers but the ethnic professionals in other fields, counselors, social workers, e.g.).

Though it may not have direct bearing upon bilingual education as such, the effort of the Korean Youth Conference held in San Bernardino, California, for the past ten years has certainly had visibly significant impact upon the second generation Koreans toward "mainstreaming". Selected Korean students of college ages have become profoundly aware of their ethnic identity with pride and with unity; share their feelings and experiences of frustrations, alienation, and exchange their creative and challenging ideas, though they may be "dreamy" for "mainstreaming". As noted psychologist Erikson advocated, the problem of "identity vs. role confusion" and "intimacy vs. isolation" in the psychosocial development of American youth in general and minority youths in particular is becoming an ever increasingly significant concern (E. Erikson, 1974).

One weakness to be examined closely in bilingual education is about the federal financial assistance. While it is noble *that Congressional approval has been obtained* for the enactment of Bilingual Education Act and the disbursement of expenditures, let it not be "tokenism" nor be "welfarized" forever. To reiterate, the need for bilingual education should not be a mere lip service to please otherwise unhappy minorities. Let them not be "crutched" on federal money permanently, because the program will have no choice but to phase out once the federal monies have been depleted. No matter for whom the bilingual program is designed, let the target minority be independent and sustain the program financially or otherwise, if they have strong convictions and the commitment to perpetuate the program. After all, one can not expect others to pay the cost for all one's needs forever.

Summary and Conclusion:

As the visibility of Koreans as an ethnic minority in America has been intensified after the post Korean-war era, some have observed that their acculturation has been satisfactory, while others feel quite the contrary.

This paper has concentrated on the observation of the latter and attempted to identify the problems/difficulties the Korean Americans in U.S. have experienced in the following categories:

- (1) The slow acculturation process, ("Adhesive Adaptation"),
- (2) The language deficiency in English, ("The Language Shock"),
- (3) Declining occupational ladder, (A Downward Syndrome),
- (4) The splitting of family relationship, (Breaking Down of "Roots"),
- (5) the Korean language maintenance and, (Ineffective Pedagogy),
- (6) Bilingual and Cross-Cultural Education, (Unilateral Heritage Theory).

Based on the problems/difficulties identified, this paper has further attempted to conceive and propose possible approaches and remedies to allaviate the problems so identified with the distinction that while the cultural assimilation in a broad and general sense may be satisfactory, the structural and the social assimilation toward a true "mainstreaming" require rigorous persual of everyone concerned.

The Koreans as a segment of the multi-ethnic fabric will remain in the history of America. The adjustment of their "life styles" and the manifestations of their "life chances" will be greatly enhanced by the effort and the commitment of *Koreans* to improve their images by the eradication of cultural ambivalence and the self-imposed social rejection. In this renewed awareness, the Koreans must not rely on others to build the "new world" for them, but to build by themselves and for themselves first.

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